

CHRISTMAS IN THE PHILIPPINES



They Play Baseball on Christmas Day



Manuel L. Quezon, President of the Philippines

A Christmas Day Masked Procession

A Season of Religious Devotion—"Open House" for Friends and Relatives—Elaborate Banquets and the Peculiar But Delicious Things They Have To Eat.

Of the high-class native Filipino, Christmas is both a solemn and a festive occasion. Indeed, it may be said with much truth that he takes his Christmas a deal more seriously than does the average American who, perhaps, is overburdened and hardened by the insufferable task of giving and receiving gifts that he wishes were at the end of the rainbow. And likewise, he enjoys the pleasures of the season more wholeheartedly.

The Filipino—not the wild tribes, mind you, but the real native Filipino, who is extremely cultured, educated and a devout follower of the Christ—child—is remarkably simple and sincere in his observance of the greatest holiday of the Christian year.

To talk with Manuel L. Quezon, one of the President Commissioners in Congress from the Philippines, or with his energetic secretary, Maximo M. Kalaw, and hear them tell of the elaborate, yet not deeply religious Christmas customs in "the islands" is to gain a new viewpoint of the Yuletide and its meaning and, perhaps, to envy them not a little.

First the Fast, Then the Feast.

Christmas is the great gala day of the Filipino. And, for that matter, so are the two weeks preceding the day itself. For up until the dawn of Christmas morning solemnity is the watchword and a devout observance of the religious significance of the occasion is markedly apparent. Then the fun and frolic break loose and smiles and laughter and the murmur

of dulcet musical instruments are in order. Before Christmas Day it is a fast, afterwards it's a feast.

For two weeks before Christmas, even the children attend mass every morning at four o'clock. And during the entire twenty-four hours of Christmas Eve, everyone fasts most rigorously. Then, with the stroke of midnight, comes the great mass in the cathedral.

As the Christmas bells peal forth the glad tidings, the houses become alive with lights, the children are awakened from their dreams, and the people rally forth to attend the mass. The air is chilly though not actually cold, of course. The streets are crowded with worshippers on their way to the churches.

Many prefer the early morning mass to the midnight one, especially the young women and girls who hesitate to risk the crushing of their prettily new dresses in the crowd. Besides, one's dress, you know, cannot be seen to advantage in the dark. So, as the sun pops up above the horizon, hundreds and hundreds of men, women and children may be seen either going to or coming from church. Everywhere the spirit of Christmas is manifest.

When the Fun Begins.

The churches are handsomely decorated with leaves, flowers and the

boughs of palms and other tropical trees, and on each altar is a miniature representation of the birth of the Christ Child in the lowly manger at Bethlehem. It is quite similar to the far-famed cradle and "lambino" of the Central American countries.

People from the outlying towns have come in to the service, resplendent in their new raincoat and with merry Christmas greetings upon their lips. "Felices Pascuas" is the word of greeting, and it may be heard on every side.

The mass over, the real fun begins. The children make happy pilgrimages to the homes of relatives and friends, attired in their best "bliss and tuckers" and very proud of them. They are the recipients of many gifts in the houses they visit; and then, too, come the many parties, the family reunions and continuous feasts of the entire week following Christmas Day.

Indeed, Christmas is a most joyful occasion for Filipino children. Aside from their little pilgrimages after the early mass—from which they return home with pockets filled with presents or tinkling with money—they have many joyous affairs. They look forward to the coming of Christmas with the same longing and anxiety as does the American child.

Strange to say, however, they do not believe in our Santa Claus. Nor do

they hang up their stockings by the chimney place. Nor do they have Christmas trees. But you may be sure, they have good reasons for rejecting all the coming of Christmas.

For days and days before the great festival, Filipino mothers are anxiously preparing to make the occasion memorable for their children. They sew diligently on pretty dresses for them, buying the most expensive material they can possibly afford.

A Day For the Children.

"Christmas is indeed a day of rejoicing for the children," said a well-known Filipino the other day, with just a suggestion of a tear in his eye as he thought of the happy times he would be unable to enjoy these years. "As the Yuletide approaches, their young faces fairly beam with joy and anticipation. They watch the making of their tiny with eager eye and try to get on with all the enthusiasm and greeting of a woman before the mirror of a fashionable dressmaker. Ah, how proud they are of the tiny shoes that have been bought for them! And how eager they are to discover what presents they will receive from their relatives and friends!

"And yet the giving and receiving of presents is really but a minor part of the Christmas celebration—with both the children and the grown-ups. We have not yet made it the burden it seems to have become in the

States."

"Peace and goodwill are the predominant spirit of the Filipino Christmas," said Mr. Kalaw, Secretary to the Commissioner, or "delegado" to Congress, the other day in his offices in the House of Representatives office building. "This is mainly expressed, not through the giving of Christmas presents, as seems to be the custom in America—though a considerable number of gifts are exchanged—but through the actual warming of one's heart toward his friends and relatives. Members of a family, rich or poor, living near each other or far distant, meet for their Christmas celebration and, whenever too great distance does not forbid, exchange visits.

Within the Family Circle.

"Indeed, family gatherings are the accepted order of the day. When one sees these informal family reunions, where love and affection are the predominant spirit; when he finds in the typical Filipino homes these happy circles of friends and relatives—he cannot help but be impressed by the beauty and strength of the ties which bind the Filipinos to their homes, their relatives and their friends.

"At such a gathering, the old folks sit together, their wrinkled faces beaming with joy, and rehearse with fond recollections their former Christ-



"Open House" on Christmas Day

mas together, or look forward to the future which awaits their children. The younger people, happy and jubilant, gather round the piano and sing their favorite kundimans, or love songs. Or, most likely, they sing them to the accompaniment of their sweet-toned string instruments.

"These love songs are plaintive indeed and very popular in the Philippines. The children, forming their own groups, compare the gifts they have received and enjoy that innocent bliss which Christmas always gives to childhood.

On Christmas Day the festivities are varied. Aside from the family reunions, parties and banquets, there are baseball games which are hotly contested. Indeed, baseball seems to have taken "the islands" by storm, and no Christmas day is now complete without its one or more championship contests.

All work, except only that which is absolutely necessary, is suspended; even the hard-working women who labor in the fields in the outlying districts find this a day of rest and pleasure.

In Manila a procession of masked revellers is held through the principal streets. Dazzling grotesque costumes and masks, the march of the bands, musical instruments of all kinds. Confetti is thrown and the fun is almost as fast and furious as that of our own Mardi Gras at New Orleans.

No Turkey For Dinner.

Bands are not needed to head the procession for, so musical are the Filipinos, that nearly every one in line of march carries a musical instrument of some sort. The procession excites the utmost interest each year and, you may be sure, the little Filipino boy is to be found tagging along at the head, just as his American brother does when a parade comes down the street.

The Philippine Christmas dinner never includes turkey, unless it be the canned, boneless variety imported from the United States. (Chicken is the national domestic bird of "the islands" and it always has the place of honor on the festive menu. In fact, many of the most appetizing of the native dishes contain chicken as their chief ingredient.

One dish, which is to the Filipino what turkey is to the American at Christmas or Thanksgiving, is called tinoma. This consists of chicken and a peculiar native vegetable called apo. This is somewhat like a pumpkin in shape, only green. The filling, or stuffing, is scooped out and mixed with peppers, spices and chicken. The whole is boiled and served very hot.

Another favorite dish for the Christmas meal is called potchero, which means the dried skin of a pig. Chicken is mixed with cut-up radishes and thin slices of bacon, the whole being baked.

Suman a Favorite.

The devout Filipino fasts all of Christmas Eve, up until midnight. Then a most elaborate supper is served in the hospitable homes. At this meal, it is considered essential to serve suman, or rice cakes. But these cakes are not made of the dry, almost tasteless rice to which we are accustomed in this country.

Suman is of a sticky, sweet nature, and is flavored with the juice of a coconut. The natives prefer it to bread at these feasts. It must be prepared most carefully to be tempting. After being securely wrapped in palm or banana leaves, it is put into an iron pot on the evening before Christmas Eve and allowed to boil all night.

Strange to relate, but few vegetables are grown in "the islands." Root crops are an unusual sight there, and potatoes and beans thrive most satisfactorily. But, to offset this apparent disadvantage, there are something over forty varieties of fruit that flourish like the proverbial green bay tree. They may be eaten raw, canned or preserved, and are most appetizing either way. Most of them are not even known by name or sight to us in this country.

At the Christmas dinner, pastries form the principal dessert. Among the most popular may be mentioned tarta made of guava jelly, preserved mangoes, and fresh or canned chico, which somewhat resembles a pear in appearance, being brownish yellow in color and oval in shape. As is true of nearly all Philippine fruits, it is said to have a much more delicious flavor than its kindred fruit of the temperate zone.

Where CHRISTMAS is a LONESOME FEAST

Government Clerks and Others Exiled in Washington Find Little Real Christmas Cheer—Subterfuges for Concealing Their Loneliness.

Every year at Christmas the boarding houses and apartment hotels, the cafes and fashionable restaurants of Washington are filled with an alien throng of men and women who are there because they cannot go anywhere else! Of course, they might "run over to New York" or take a trip to some other nearby city, but it would merely mean varying the menu and the price of the Christmas meal—in either event it would end in partaking of a paid-for dinner rather than of one proffered in the name of love or relationship.

For Washington is essentially a Governmental city and its inhabitants are largely nomads who regard it—even after twenty years of residence—as merely a pause in the journey of business life.

Thousands of women—and no optimist would want to estimate how many men—dwell in its flats and rented "rooms with and without board" who have no home connections beyond the District of Columbia.

With Congress in session, and just adjourning temporarily "over" the festive occasion, there is a small army of clerks, secretaries and their families; the long distance national legislators and THEIR families; and the numerous imported chauffeurs and their families who are compelled to pass the Yuletide among strangers.

The Lucky Ones Leave Town.

Of course the wealthier classes "go back home" for that day, when every civilized human being who has a roof-tree wishes to be beneath it. But distance and business keep many of the moneyed individuals in Washington, and although they accept invitations to dine among friends and accept at the plebeian custom of "making such a fuss about Christmas" they cannot even decide themselves into thinking any substitute for the family celebration very joyful. And this Christmas, when the Vice-President of the United States lives in a hotel and more Senators and Members are living in what Shaw has termed "Widowers' Houses" than for a decade past, the contingent of homeless ones is especially large.

But these are merely inconvenienced for a single Christmas Day! They know that everybody else knows that circumstances, and not necessity, have caused them to remain at the national capital and to partake of turkey served by a country club, or city hotel rather than by one's own favorite Uncle, or Grandma, or butler.

It is the Civil Service delegation who come in for one's sympathy and regret.

For more years than they care to count, hundreds of these "outlanders" have drifted along in placid Washington, always meaning to "go home for Christmas" but never quite making it. Gradually the old folks they left behind—to take the job that seemed so large at home and grew smaller with each successive mile of the journey toward it—have died off, the farms have been sold or changed hands, the single ones have married or grown callous about writing when there was nothing in common to mention.

Gradually the months have become years and friends in the Departments seem closer than the relations hundreds of miles away. The salary which was to pay off the mortgage has proved just sufficient to keep its possessor two laps ahead of the loan shark, or in a little more comfortable habitat than his or her fellows.

And then, suddenly, there is a tang of cedar in the frosty air of Pennsylvania avenue, fir trees begin piling up like a primitive barricade over by the Centre Market, people are hurrying with bundles and children—they are the dominant note in the Christmas atmosphere—shouting in anticipation and the Government clerk remembers! It is Christmas and he has nowhere to spend the day! Nowhere that counts! For the Christmas day dinner is the one meal of the year which depends for its success mostly upon relatives, good humor and "presents with love behind."

One's Own Table is a Luxury.

The heads of various Departments, the married men of the Service, the women in it who have taken thought and brought on part at least of their original household are exempt from this tragedy. They have homes and can go to market and hang up their stockings and in every way duplicate Christmas on the farm, or in some city or village far remote from the national capital.

The typical Government bachelor, widower, old maid, middle-aged widow and young girl who have to face the loneliness and humiliation of Christmas in the City of Magnificent Distances know that it can seem a very cruel, heartless place indeed, for all its lovely squares and lights in hospitable windows and sound of mellow chimneys.

The "orphaned" women feel their desolation most keenly! Frequently two or three of them make up a little party and go to a matinee—with the prospect of a nice dinner afterwards in some downtown hotel, where the cards are painted with holly and the rooms are as festooned as a church wedding.

But did you ever go to a Christmas matinee in Washington? The very actors and actresses look melancholy because THEY are far from home and only the "really and truly" family folk, who came because they thought it a pleasant diversion after the midday meal, look and are happy and able to enjoy the performance.

A weary little woman who has supported her entire family for years by slaving in Washington, once told this writer that she would rather be

And great is the ostentatious pride of such a one and deep the envy of his associate boarders.

To the everlasting credit of the Washington landlady, he said that she usually does everything in her power to give her house the semblance of a real home at Christmas and to make her "guests" feel they are there by invitation rather than purchase.

Perhaps she has her own family and would prefer to eat just with them, but she knows well that such a course would arouse most unchristianlike suspicions that she was having a better dinner than that provided for her "people."

The Boarding House Dinner.

The tablecloth is generally snowy white, the turkey nearly tender, the cranberry sauce molded and firm. There is enough of every vegetable and some kind of pie, ice cream, or pudding. But the one essential to every cheerful Christmas feast the boardinghouse keeper cannot provide! She is not related, or otherwise financially interested in any of the diners at her table, or they toward one another. The spirit of good fellowship, of friendliness, of kin and of enthusiastic children are as utterly lacking as they are in jail. So, the turkey becomes tasteless, the plum pudding seems canned and the whole like Dead Sea fruit in the mouths of dissatisfied eaters.

At the table will probably be a woman who looks sixteen from the back and sixty from the front. She would love to eat her Christmas dinner sans the upright figure which convinces a Government that she is not too old for her job—but she dares not relax. A young girl in the early twenties, who has just paid up her first railroad fare from home and is trying to make good as a Government stenographer—eats her first Christmas meal away from home and eats it sad-eyed and hurriedly that she may rush upstairs and read again the letters from her family. "This will be my last Christmas in Washington," she announces cheerfully.

At this same table the hard-eyed woman, who has held her place for years against the onslaughts of younger women and ambitious political henchmen, smiles a cynical little smile.

They Walk Christmas Morning Through Rock Creek Park.

How many years has it been since HER first Washington Christmas dinner and the promise never to spend another like it? Somehow the expenses always seemed to come double at that season and she never did go back home. Now the day is just a torment to be gone through with, like a disagreeable bit of work at the Office.

The head of a department for scientific work is a foreigner. Instinctively the landlady has given him the head of the table. He is a genius and looks it. Also, his heart is very far

across the seas and he takes no consolation from this paid-for Christmas dinner.

The Government Civil Service is prolific in women who have divorced their husbands and who have buried their wives; and for these the boardinghouse takes on an added bitterness of memory impossible to the never married.

If the landlady has a child it may thrive along under the title of "brat" and uncomplimentary remarks all the other days of the year, but at Christmas it is feted and made much of in the Washington boardinghouse. The utter loneliness and instinctive desire to give, when cars are filled with bundle-laden humanity and everybody is revealing something for someone else, reveals itself in the "innates" bestowing presents upon fellow employees whom they scarcely bother to be civil to in the dog days.

Sends Presents to Herself.

More than one feminine clerk—who has a tiny one-room-and-bath bachelor apartment, a well-paying position, nice clothes and a collection of "just good friends"—saves up and buys and sends to her own address Christmas tokens from fruit shops, candy stores, from the jeweler, all tied with ribbons and wrapped in tissue paper. Funny? Well, not if one could see into the heart of the sender.

But the landlady has her Christmas trial, too! Her dissatisfied boarders can go to a matinee after dinner or to moving pictures, if they like, while she must stay at home and figure on how many different ways the remains of the turkey can be served. Often she, too, is lonesome and away from all of her people. For Washington is a veritable mecca for the distressed gentlewoman, who has been compelled to take up "rooming" and "boarding" as a profession. And sometimes she serves the best she has only to hear muttered "Well, such a dinner and WHAT we pay her!"

Down at his hotel the rich bachelor statesman envies his fellow secretary because the latter has a little home, a wife and child. He realizes that Christmas is the one day when money will not buy happiness, even though its lack causes misery. The Capitol is deserted, the hotel lobby looks like the week after election, the White House is not receiving and he can go to the country club or to dine with friends, but it is not the same as being at home.

Dinner in Restaurants.

Washington has many "detained" Congressmen, anxious officeholders and homeless officeholders as well as a continual round of tourists from every part of the world who frequent the restaurants and lunch rooms on Christmas day. The managements make an especial occasion of the evening meal. Music plays, but never "Home, Sweet Home" more coolers are esped beside more tables than on any other occasion except when Georgetown University wins a football victory.

There are shaded lights and delicious things to eat and smiling faces and all that. But it isn't Christmas and it isn't home! The only sort of home that is a lack to eat Christmas dinner in a hotel are the ones who have nice homes to eat it in if they

Many keep to their rooms all Christmas Day.

ham sandwich in private than a turkey in public on Christmas Day—and she has many disciples.

Some of these people cannot afford to go "home," some have, through neglect, reached the stage where they are ashamed to go, and others are the pitifully orphaned class of being the last of their line.

Relic of the Confederacy.

One former Confederate, who used to boast that he never knew how many people would sit at his Christmas dinner in the South, now goes to Baltimore every Christmas morning and spends the day—spends it in some hotel eating alone; he simply will not face his fellow boarders who think he is down in Virginia with relatives.

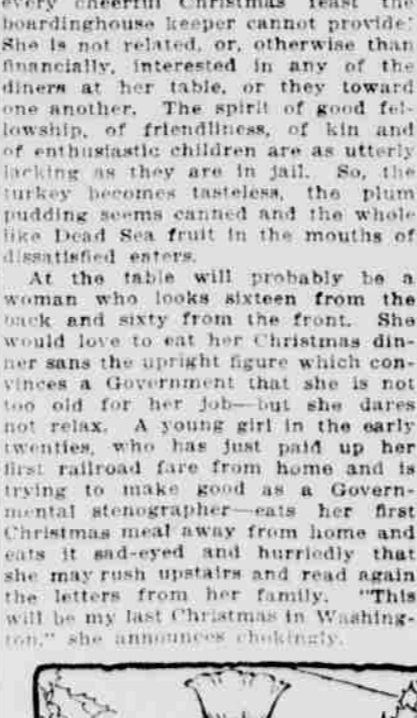
Some of these derelicts—"family" he it understood—have made friends among the married element of the Departments and sometimes are asked to spend the day at their homes.



One of Uncle Sam's Government girls.



Many keep to their rooms all Christmas Day.



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less paid, pad of the leopards and growing of lions reminds them of their own eager existence—and for them it means only one day a year of rebellion. They lunch together in the inevitable boardinghouse; evening, however, finds them at some cheerful hotel.

In no other American city are there so many aged lovers trying to discover Christmas contentment in a burlesque of the feast.

And some of these people have put away the possibility of cheerful Christmases through a more love for material things. There is a woman clerk in one of the Departments who boasts that she has bought a diamond year since she entered the Service. Diamonds are very beautiful and the numerous ones she possesses look very lovely on her white hands, but instead of presenting them she could have spent them on Christmas in the Middle West home where she is almost forgotten by the younger members of the family.

They walk Christmas morning through Rock Creek Park or go to the Zoo. Something in the ceaseless



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The Boarding House Christmas Dinner.